

THE BUILDER.

PRECURSOR NUMBER.

THIRD IMPRESSION OF FIVE THOUSAND.

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ADDRESS.

Upon the occasion of addressing, for the first time, a particular class, and that too through the medium of a decidedly class-paper, it seems to us that the views and intentions of its conductor should be unreservedly stated. We commence, then, in the spirit that will characterise our future advocacy of the varied interests enumerated in another page. It is avowed that we enter upon this portion of the wide field of literature and science as our legitimate province, inasmuch as we were brought up, educated, and have long wrought in it; mere qualification for any undertaking is, however, but one amongst the elements of success, and unless combined with well-timed efforts, frequently disappoints the possessor:—we invite the reader to judge of the timeliness of our own by the following incident, the explanations it gives rise to, and of the result in the publication before him.

Conversing a few months since with a leading bookseller and publisher in this metropolis, we had occasion to remark upon the costly, not to say exorbitant, price of Architectural books; this fact was not disputed, and the cause at once ascribed to the smallness of the number of readers, which made it impossible it should be otherwise. We almost held up our hands in astonishment, as we repeated his words "smallness of the number of readers!" Call you five hundred thousand a small number? Can a class of half a million male adults, whom we may emphatically term all readers, and members of reading families; a class of half a million of the pick of British Artisans; a class of the highest intelligence, and (measured by their wages and numbers) highest in wealth: can we talk of the smallness of the number of readers, and assume to know any thing of this large and influential body? It was in this strain that we interrogated our friend the bookseller; it was a burst of somewhat indignant feeling, for we had long thought on the subject, and felt convinced that the fault lay, not with the reader, but rather with the writer and publisher. We have since put the case in a familiar way to other parties, as we will now proceed to do to our readers.

Suppose the Grocers, whose business it is to supply the commodities of their shops in a way suited to the daily wants of customers, were to act upon the principle of refusing to parcel out their tea and sugar, or to dispose of it in less quantities than a chest of the former, or a hundred weight of the latter; or, bringing the parallel nearer, suppose the Bakers, in dispensing the "stuff of life," were to set themselves above the standard of purveying the quarter, and half-quarter, loaf; or again, that the Butcher should sell his meat in nothing less than the carcass; nor that these tradesmen were to study only the palate and appetite of dainty and refined stomachs; what, let us ask, would be the condition of men of moderate means, and homely requirements? Why, just that which in regard to the food of the mind is the condition of the Working Builder.

There are in England, Scotland, and Wales, one hundred and twenty thousand Carpenters, of full age, and we may assume for Ireland (the

codified accounts not assisting us here) thirty thousand more, making a total of one hundred and fifty thousand, exclusive of apprentices, in this trade alone, who, in common with the other co-operating Building Artificers, require to read and study (and in some instances to abstruseness) on all subjects connected with their craft. For these hundreds of thousands there has hitherto been no retailing of proper food for the mind; no books at moderate prices, and in suitable parcels; and if we except the issue in parts and numbers of works such as those of Mr. Peter Nicholson, the large sale of which confirms the truth of our convictions, nothing in the shape of a trade instructor, or magazine, adapted to their several pursuits has yet been offered to this immense body. The "Architectural Magazine," by Mr. London, indeed, did wonders in its way, and other journals which have followed in its track are, no doubt, well-adapted to the particular departments whose cause they espouse, and promote; but what is there, we ask again, for the work-shop, and for the fire-side circle of the Building Artisan?

Examine our PROSPECTUS, and contemplate the numbers forming an array of what we have advisedly termed "the pick of British Artisans." Be it remembered, however, that we do not use these words in an invective sense, or in disparagement of other bodies of the industrious citizens of the empire; but, considering the standard of perfection, in body and mind, required for the proper practising of the Building Arts, and considering also the healthful nature of their occupations, it will not be deemed arrogant in us to speak thus of the class to which we have the honour to belong; in addition, we have the influence which numbers, intelligence, and wealth, if united, most ever secure to us. With all these advantages present to literary eyes and ears, in an age of professed catering, printing, and publishing, is it not one of the greatest marvels—a huge paradox—that there is no such thing as a *Builder's Newspaper and Magazine*?

We have just said Newspaper and Magazine, for it has occurred to us (rather happily, we opine and trust), to combine them; that is to say, the particular features which distinguish either. We would relieve the Working Builder from a double charge for matter less available to him in practice, as well as from the still greater evil, in many instances, of a dry magazine at home, and a well maintained newspaper at a public-house. We have an eye to the superior household and domestic economy which prevails, and which we would have still more constant in the Builder's Circle. We would give him a book on his trade, worth preserving, and a newspaper for the reading of his wife and family, as well as for himself; and, finally, we would make the weekly pence set apart from his earnings, for the gratification of a common feeling of curiosity, not begrudged by the partner of his cares on the one hand, or to be regretted by the most thrifty economist on the other; since, even the news will be the vehicle of trade knowledge, and consequently of the means of trade with its advantages and profits.

In designating our paper, we use the word

"Builder" in its most extended sense—instantiating a house, or other edifice, we regard it from the procurement and preparation of the materials, to the fixing upon its site, and to its full completion for the residence, use, and enjoyment of man, and which includes the making of the design or plan, "breaking" ground, in it is termed; the erection, or building up; decorating, fitting, and furnishing; the supply of water and drainage; and even the laying out of the garden, pleasure grounds, and park. This is the whole art of building, or, in other words, of providing and perfecting human habitations. To all, therefore, who are engaged in the Art so defined, we address ourselves without distinction, and without preference; the interests of all will, to the best of our power, be consulted, promoted, and advocated.

It now becomes us to say a few words as to how far this step (that is, the issuing of the "Precursor Newspaper") is to be considered on our part as an experiment; for, without being clear and explicit, we should, in case of failure, or rather abandonment, of our enterprise (for failure there can be none, where provision is made against that result), incur the blame of not having given our friends, the Building Classes, a clear view of the part which we humbly conceive it is their duty and interest to take in the business.

The "Precursor" is a trial number; and we make the appeal plainly and distinctly. Our part of the affair is to make every effort to supply what we consider a useful and most desirable public object. The part of the building fraternity, to whom it is particularly addressed, and the part of those who regard as a duty all the exertions they are making in the cause of public education; and also of those who pursue the arts out of a pure love and liking, is to support our humble efforts as they deem them worthy of appreciation. Let the sacrifice called for on either side be temperate. Let the covenants between us be of an equitable nature, and as we start upon the principle of discountenancing, as far as practicable, all lottery and risky speculation (of which we will say more presently), so in the basis of this compact with our friends and readers, we would remove all unnecessary hazard, or complexion of adventure. We give our best exertion in what appears to us a work of common good; if our friends think well and approvingly of these exertions, and that work, let them contribute their part, were it alone for economy and fairness sake.

We do not rely upon the levianth power of capital for our success; but we purpose building it up by an honest and diligent pursuit of the objects defined, aided by a fair share of judgment, and other necessary qualifications; and we anticipate it in the cheerful and generous response of our countrymen: and this Precursor Number, as its name implies, has its office in searching out the way, and exploring the track which its successor "THE BUILDER" is designed to follow. If the Precursor finds a ready passport, and a significant welcome, of which we have no doubt, it will be promptly followed by that of which it will have been the harbinger.

We invite, therefore, an active inspection of the Precursor amongst our friends; but, above all, we respectfully invite communications from the

* We would instance the *Third Engineer and Architect*.